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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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Oct. 4, 1994

MONTANA POLL: MOST MONTANANS SUPPORT CHANGE IN GUN LAW

MISSOULA --

Most Montanans, including a majority of voting Montanans, would support a change in Montana law to prohibit anyone convicted of a violent felony in the state from ever owning a gun, according to the latest Montana Poll conducted by The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

The bureau interviewed 411 adult Montanans by telephone Sept. 9-13, 1994, for this edition of the Montana Poll.

Under current Montana law, there is no prohibition on gun ownership for persons with certain violent felony convictions in Montana once their jail term, probation or parole has been completed, said Susan Selig Wallwork, the bureau's director of survey research. However, an advisory group to Attorney General Joe Mazurek wants to change the law to ban certain convicted felons from ever purchasing or possessing a firearm. Under the proposed revision, these convicted felons would be classified as being under state supervision for the rest of their lives, and the prohibition could be established, Wallwork said.

Seven Montanans in ten (72 percent) said they would support such a ban. Only two in ten (18 percent) were opposed, and barely one in ten (9 percent) was undecided.

Support for such a prohibition was consistently strong and widespread, both geographically and demographically, Wallwork said. At the low end -- with about six in ten supporting a ban --

-more-

were those with low incomes (61 percent), those who were not registered to vote (64 percent), and western Montanans (65 percent). At the high end -- with roughly eight in ten supportive -- were likely voters and college graduates (76 percent) and Democrats and eastern Montanans (77 percent). The higher support in eastern Montana was noticeably stronger in the southern half, especially in Gallatin and Yellowstone counties, she said. And those who labeled themselves political conservatives were somewhat more supportive (76 percent) than were liberals (70 percent) and moderates (74 percent).

The Montana Poll's statewide sample was drawn using BBER's two-stage random sampling process. Its random digit telephone sampling program generates a statewide sample of telephone numbers, proportionate with the distribution of households in the state. A second random sampling procedure is then used to select one adult respondent in each household, taking into account the number and gender of adults in the household. The procedure generates a representative cross-section of Montana's adult population.

The sample size is sufficient for a maximum error margin of plus or minus 5 percentage points. The error margin for any subgroups would be larger, depending on the size of each group.

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Contact: Susan Wallwork, (406) 243-5113.

SJ/kr
State and weeklies
Gunlaw.rl

MONTANA POLL

Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Montana (Missoula, Montana).

Sample: Adult Montanans, statewide

Dates: September 9-13, 1994

Topic: Prohibiting gun ownership for anyone with violent felony conviction in Montana

"Under Montana law, anyone convicted of a violent crime or other felony in the state may buy a gun once their jail term, probation, or parole is completed. But, it has been proposed that Montana's law be changed so that anyone convicted of a felony in Montana could essentially be banned from ever owning a gun.

How do you feel about changing Montana's law so that a convicted felon could be banned from owning a gun in Montana? Generally speaking, would you SUPPORT such a ban, or would you be OPPOSED, or what?"

	<u>SUPPORT</u>	<u>OPPOSE</u>	<u>UNDECIDED</u>
All respondents (n=411)	72%	18%	9%
Registered to vote (n=341)	74%	18%	8%
Likely to vote November 8 (n=327)	76%	16%	7%

Notes: Maximum error margin is plus/minus 5 percentage points for the total sample (all respondents); margin would be higher for subgroups, depending on size. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

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